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IN THE UNITED STATES PATENT AND TRADEMARK OFFICE

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INFORMATION DISCLOSURE STATEMENT

Assistant Commissioner of Patents Washington, D.C. 20231

Dear Sir:

Applicants submit herewith, in accordance with 37 CFR § 1.98, the patents, publications and other information listed on the enclosed Form PTO-1449.

The references submitted herewith are those of which Applicants are aware, which they believe may be material to the examination of this application and, with respect to which there may be a duty to disclose in accordance with 37 CFR § 1.56. While the references identified may be material to the examination of this application pursuant to 37 CFR § 1.56, the citation of these references is not intended to constitute an admission that any reference referred to herein is prior art to the invention of this application, unless specifically designated as such. Additionally, the filing of this Information Disclosure Statement shall not be construed to mean that any search has been made or, that if made, such search was complete or exhaustive, or that no other material information as defined in 37 CFR § 1.56 exists.

In accordance with 37 CFR § 1.97(b)(3), this Information Disclosure Statement is being submitted before mailing of the first Office Action on the merits.

A list of the references is set forth on Form PTO-1449, which is enclosed herewith, along with a copy of each cited reference. Applicants respectfully request that the Examiner return to Applicants a copy of the Form PTO-1449 indicating consideration of the references cited thereon.

Applicants do not believe that any fees are due. If, however, it is determined that fees are owed, Applicants hereby authorize that such fees be charged to Deposit Account No. 17-0026.

Respectfully submitted,

Dated: November 16,2001

By: San

Sandip S. Minhas

Registration No. 44,945

QUALCOMM Incorporated

Attn: Patent Department 5775 Morehouse Drive

San Diego, California 92121-1714

Telephone:

(858) 651-1179

Facsimile:

(858) 658-2502

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